1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

622 [538] answer to questions and which gave an answer which seemed so foolish to the devil that she tore the oracle up by the roots.[4] He is perhaps a trifle too easy-going and a few people appear to take advantage of his good nature; the village, as opposed to some of its less prosperous neighbours, has considerable arrears of taxes; the Mandal himself is considerably in debt. When animals are slaughtered for sacrifice he is in great demand as butcher to distribute the different portions; everybody knows him to be fair and nobody questions his decisions on this or other matters of greater importance. [183] He is very explicit about the main orientations of the culture; for example, he explained that the help that will be given by everybody to poor or indebted men was a special Lepcha custom; 'and I think it is a very good one because it makes everybody realise that they are part of one group and the happiness of one is the happiness of all.'

622 781 In some respects Chala Mandal exaggerated the casualness with which all Lepchas, except lamas, treat the minor details of religious rites or the performance of ordinary actions. A constantly recurring phrase, which almost turns into a catchword, in Lepcha conversation is *ket ma-nin*—'it doesn't matter'. The grain isn't covered and the birds will get it—*ket ma-nin*. There is no dried fish and the offering ought to have it—*ket ma-nin*. Chala Mandal was completely sceptical about new-fangled notions, such as the danger to people or plants from menstruating women, which have been imported from outside.

622 In the event of the Mandal dying without a suitable heir the *youmi* (see below) will act as substitute until the householders have chosen one of their number to become Mandal; preference would probably be given to a member of the same *ptso* but there is no obligation to do so. When a unanimous choice has been decided upon the name will be submitted in a petition to the Rhennock Kazi. For two years the candidate will be on approval, and only after he has shown himself to be thoroughly satisfactory will his tenure of office be officially confirmed. Even when the new Mandal is closely related to the old one he must be formally elected by the householders and confirmed in office by the Maharajah and Kazi. The chief qualifications demanded of a Mandal are wisdom, character, popularity, and adequate wealth.

● 624 The offices of Muktair and Mandal can be held by lamas; the other two offices, *youmi* and *gyapŏn* can not, as these offices may

[4] See Appendix V, b.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

entail directly or indirectly the slaughter of animals. In some villages the two offices are combined in a single holder, but in Lingthem they are kept quite distinct. The office of *youmi* is undoubtedly the older, as the linguistic evidence shows; for *youmi* is a Lepcha word and *gyapōn* Sikkimese-Tibetan; nor is there a Lepcha equivalent, the only other term used being the general north-Indian *karbari*. I have no evidence as to the time when the specific work of *gyapōn* was distinguished; in Lingthem the office has existed at least three generations.

In Lingthem the *youmi* are selected from those who have already held the office of *gyapōn*; they consist of old and experienced men who assist the Mandal with their advice and efforts in his various works; they also with the *gyapōn* try to compose quarrels or minor misdemeanours without bringing them to the official notice of the Mandal. *Youmi* are selected by the Mandal in consultation with all the responsible householders; as one *youmi* gets too old, or wishes to give up work, or dies, the Mandal nominates another from the ex-*gyapōn* to replace him. In Lingthem itself there are three *youmi*; Takneum, Songpo and Ashyok. There is also a separate *youmi* in Panung and a fifth at Liklyang across the river. The *youmi* have no privileges of any sort beyond such prestige as the title gives, but they also have comparatively little work.

The chief work on the administrative side of the village falls on the *gyapōn*. Each householder in turn has to hold the office for three years; a sort of rota is established, and people know for some time beforehand when their turn of office falls due. The work is distinctly arduous; it entails the actual collection of the taxes, the summoning of all citizens for ceremonies or when collective work for a village (for example bridge- or road-repairing, or carrying loads) is required, the collection of grain from each house for communal ceremonies and the prevention of crime and quarrelling. A great deal of the *gyapōn's* time is taken up in communal business, and consequently their own work and cultivation may have to be somewhat neglected; except for such rare characters as enjoy the power of commanding their neighbours the office holds no advantages. It is clearly stated that it is part of the duty of a householder to undertake this arduous and unrewarding work for his fellows; on that condition will his fellows in their turn look after him. The present *gyapōns* in Lingthem are Kurma and Tinkep. Their term of office finishes in the early autumn of 1937 and they will be replaced by Agyung, the adopted son of Serving,

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

624 and Itup the son of Takneum *youmi*. There is also a *gyapŏn* in Panung and one in Liklyang.

iii

627 The objects of the four above-named offices are twofold; the regulation of intra-village affairs and the collection of taxes for the State. Within the village crime has to be prevented and possibly punished, quarrels stopped, and the poor and needy helped.

651 There is a fixed tax of Rs. 5 a year on each house, a small tax on certain grain seeds which are sown for crops and a sales tax on the cardamum fruit, which is regulated according to the price fetched and automatically deducted at selling.[5] The total tax payable by the fifty houses under Chala Mandal's jurisdiction is Rs. 3500, averaging Rs. 70[6] per household. The money is collected by the *gyapŏn* and taken by the Mandal to Gangtok. Although the payment of the taxes is somewhat resented, especially by the older men, it does not seem to me to bear hardly on the Lepchas. Both money and the cash-producing crop of cardamum were introduced together at the beginning of this century—formerly taxes were paid in kind—and everybody grows more than sufficient cardamum to pay their taxes. There are nevertheless some arrears of taxes in Lingthem; indeed a couple of households are seven years in arrear, and that not through poverty but through fecklessness. So feckless are they that the Mandal has threatened that if they do not pay by the next year he will refuse to be responsible for them, in which case they will be summoned to the chief Court in Gangtok. Generally

[5] The actual taxes on seed are as follows:—

Wet rice	Rs. –/8 on 8 lbs.
Millet and maize	Rs. –/12 on 8 lbs.
Dry rice	Rs. 1/– on 32 lbs.

Other crops are not taxed. The tax on cardamum is graduated according to the selling price per maund of 80 lbs.

If the maund fetches	Rs. 10/–	the tax is	Rs. –/14
" " "	Rs. 20/–	"	Rs. 1/8
" " "	Rs. 40/–	"	Rs. 2/8.

This tax has recently been reduced. Formerly it was at Rs. 2/8 at under Rs. 20, and Rs. 5/– over that sum. The 1936 price of cardamum was Rs. 12/– a maund. There is also a small tax, not very efficiently collected, on animals pastured in, or produce gathered from the forest.

[6] About £5 7 0 or 26 dollars.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

would otherwise ensue during his absence on state business.

Every Mandal has under him several assistants known as *Karbari*. The number of these is not fixed and is at the discretion of individual headmen. Karbaris are appointed for a period of three years, and with the exception of Lamas everyone takes on the duty in turn. The roster goes on indefinitely, so that if any particular man is not called upon during his own lifetime the turn devolves upon his son. There is no pay nor any other material advantage in the office of Karbari, but it is not unpopular, since it gives the holder a certain amount of authority.

When a man has retired from the office of Karbari he is eligible for the appointment of *Youmi*. At present time there are four Youmis in Lingtem. Whenever any matter crops up which can only be decided by reference to customary law the Mandal calls in the Youmis to aid him in giving a decision. They are usually very old men, and because of this they can decide such matters as whether there is any reason why a particular couple should not be married: or if one man runs off with the wife of another what compensation he should be required to pay, and so on. The word *Youmi* does not appear in the dictionary and I do not know what it means. I believe, however, that the office may be a survival of tribal administration. It is not known in other parts of Sikkim.

There is no *per capita* tax in Sikkim but every house pays five rupees a year. In addition to this there is a tax of one rupee for each sixteen pounds of dry rice sown, and the same for maize. Rice grown wet, in terraced fields (a recent innovation), is taxed at eight annas for eight pounds of seed, but barley, buckwheat, and wheat are free. The economics of Lingtem, and indeed of most parts of Sikkim, are now based upon the cardamom, the sale of which is a state monopoly. The market price of cardamoms fluctuates from year to year, and for this reason the tax is adjusted to a sliding scale. When the rate is ten rupees a maund (approximately eighty pounds) the cultivator pays a tax of fourteen annas a maund; one and a half rupees when the